

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Southwest Fabricators

Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence

Southwest Fabricators on the Move

Client Profile:

Southwest Fabricators manufactures cylindrical elevated bulk storage containers. The containers, which can exceed 55 tons, are fabricated from plate steel, structural steel tubing and other components. They hold a variety of products from cattle feed to bulk fertilizer. The 25-year-old company employs about 20 people at its plant in Hugo, Oklahoma.

Situation:

Southwest Fabricators needed to increase production and improve efficiency. The manufacturer was housed in an old, converted armory and the business just couldn't grow in that building. Company leaders sought advice from the Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence (The Alliance), a NIST MEP network affiliate.

Solution:

Win Adams and Shea Pilgreen, applications engineers with The Alliance, worked with local manufacturing extension agent, Ken Norris, to develop a plan for shop layout, process improvement, and facilities design. The three spent time on the shop floor observing the manufacturing process, accessing non-value added operations, and developing manufacturing process charts. Norris worked with local partners to secure land in a Hugo industrial park where a new manufacturing plant and offices were built. Adams and Pilgreen designed the layout for the new 13,000 square-foot factory. It includes overhead cranes for lifting and positioning large fabricated assemblies, a process that used to be cumbersome and time-consuming. The new process flows were devised to maximize efficiency, eliminate non-value added activities, and reduce work in progress. Adams' and Pilgreen's plant layout was designed with a lighting plan and equipment specifications to save more than 50 percent on energy costs.

Results:

- * Increased sales by \$1.3 million.
- * Retained \$500,000 in sales.
- * Created 10 new jobs.
- * Retained 15 jobs.
- * Avoided \$375,000 in unnecessary investments.
- * Expected to save more than half on energy costs.

Testimonial:

"With the help of The Alliance, Southwest Fabricators will stay competitive in today's global marketplace."

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Troy Minyard, Owner